

Robert Dinwiddie to George Washington, August 19, 1756, Letters to Washington and Accompanying Papers. Published by the Society of the Colonial Dames of America. Edited by Stanislaus Murray Hamilton.

FROM GOVERNOR DINWIDDIE.

WILLIAMSBURG Aug. 19th. 1756

SIR

Yr. Letter of the 4th: I recd. & note its Contents—I observe You have been much engag'd in settling the proper Plans for the Chain of Forts propos'd to be built; & I doubt not the Places You have fix'd on are the most proper, as You know the Situation of the Cotry You are the best Judge thereof.

With Concern I see the Roll of Yr. Companies & I am sorry they are so deficient in Numbers, the Officers by no means compli'd with their Promises & Engagemts when they recd. their Commissions; & the Draughts from the Militia much short of my Expectations, & indeed the laying the Fine of 10 £ on those that wou'd not march out entirely defeated the Law, & was much against my Opinion, but I was glad of any Law that had a prospect of augmentg. the Forces; but even with that Inconvenience, the Affair has been poorly conducted in the different Counties the dastardly Spirit in our common People, & the want of proper Rule in the Officers, has been of very bad Consequence to our Affiars.

I approve of your disposal of the two vacant Companies to Yourself & Colo. Stephens—I shall be glad the Draughts made after the return of the Militia be as You desire those from Prince Wm Fairfax & Culpepper to march directly to Winchester, & please write to the

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Comanding Officers accordingly, as I am so much hurried that I have not Time, You may write in my Name.

I am sorry for the Behavior of the Militia that were with Lieut. Rutherford, the Officers are deficient in keeping them under strict Command.—Till an Expedition is concerted to the Ohio Capt. Stewart's Company must do Duty on Foot. & their Pay must be reduced during that Time, & You may assure them as soon as the Troop is again form'd, their Pay shall be augmented as at first.

The building the Forts is a necessary Work, but the protecting the Frontiers is more essential; therefore I would recommend as much as You possibly can to have Your Men at Call on any apparent Danger, tho' I fear it will be impracticable when divided at such distance, unless You appoint a proper Place for a general Rendezvous on any Alarm given which You are the only Judge of from Your Knowledge of the Country.

If You can enlist Servants agreeable to the Act of Parliamt. the Master of such Servant shall be paid for the Time they have to serve in Proportion to the first Purchase,¹ but I think You shou'd be careful not to enlist any Convicts, who probably may be fractious, & bad Examples to the others, & I wish this may have the desir'd Effect for I cannot think of any Method to raise Men 'till the Assembly meets & that at present is very uncertain.

I am glad You have thot. of Lieut. McNeil who I belive is a very deserving Man—As to Fort Cum bld, its a King's Fort & a Magazine for Stores, its not in my Power to order it to be deserted, & if we did it wou'd encourage the Enemy to be more audacious; when Ld. Loudoun comes here which I expect wil be about the 20th. of Nov. he has full Powers to do what he thinks proper & a Representation to him will be regular, at present it must be properly supported with Men, & I think from the Plan of Your Forts one of them is not above Miles distant from Fort Cumbld.

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I observe You mention Your Men want many Necessaries; I do not touch the Public Money, I shewed Your Letter to the Speaker & I suppose he will answer it—I told him I thot. the men shou'd be paid the full 8d. per Day witht. any Deduction, which is agreed to, & that the new Cloathing on arrival be given them by way of Encouragement, & I hope this Step will raise their Spirits & engage them to the discharge of their Duty with Alacrity; if You had sent Word what they mostly wanted might be purchas'd here, as I suppose the Cloathg. will be here before Xtmass.

If I hear of any Oppty I shall send you two Drums, but I suppose you may have the old ones mended, the Associators had two which were left at Winchester or Fredricksbg., which You shou'd call for—I now write to Colo. Fairfax to pay You the Balla. in his Hands of 600 £ he had of me—I know Nothing of Capt. Gist's Accts probably they may be with the Comittee, I shall be glad to do him any good Offices in my Power.

The Acct. Capt. McNeil writes You about the Rangers in Augusta I believe is Truth & shall take Care when they come to be paid, having several Informations to the same purpose.

I believe You will not be summon'd on Napp's Affair if Witnesses sufficient without You can be procured as I shall be glad You were here about the 20th. of Nov. when I expect the Earl of Loudoun—I desire You will order Lieut. Hall down here the 14th of Octr. to be Evidence against Mr. Hedgeman who has treated my Character in a villanous manner, & with great Injustice & I am determin'd to make an Example of him.

A great Body of Quakers waited on me in regard to their Friends with You, praying they may not be Whipped, use them with lenity, but as they are at their own Expence I wou'd have them remain as long as the other Draughts —

I have had no proper Application in regard the Militia that have enlisted & if they do I shall give little Attention to it, as from what You mention they enlisted without any Compulsion, & took the Money without Objection, or offering to return the same in twenty-four Hours

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—The incorporating the Rangers with the Regiment will be very agreeable, if done with their Consent, & I hope by Arguments You may be able to prevail on them, for the Fund appropriated for paying them as Rangers is exhausted; they will now receive 8d. per Day & a Suit of Cloaths as soon as they arrive without paying for them.

The Nottoway Inds. are not return'd, I think they shd. be paid to encourage the Tuscarroras to our Assistance—Mr. Timberleak, if he inclines to serve as a Volunteer, must wait the course of Preferment with the other Young Gentlemen.

I wrote fully to Ld. Loudoun about an Expedition to the Ohio, but his Attention to the Affairs to the No.ward is so great, that I cannot expect any Thing of that kind to be done this Year, but when he comes here I shall have an Oppty of speaking fully on that & several other Matters.

I cannot tell how to prevent the Pennsylvania Butchers driving of our Cattle, unless You threaten them in a Military Manner; it's a Grievance that shou'd be amended & therefore what present Steps You take to prevent it, I shall support You therein—And no doubt Provisions must be purchas'd for the Regiments & the Forts, I shall speak to the Treasurer on that Subject, & a Commissary must be appointed, I shall therefore press the giving of Money to purchase Provisions of all kinds.

I did hear of one Cherokee's being with the other Indians that took Vass's Fort,² & I understand there are numbers of each different Tribe, & they assume the Name of Alleganey Indians. I have not heard from Major Lewis since he left this; I sent a Messenger to the Cherokees about five Weeks ago & expect his return very soon, I hope he will bring Nothing but what may be agreeable—Pray cannot You procure a trusty Indian or two to go to the Twightwees to endeavour to keep them in our Interest, & to let them know the Number of Warriors the Great King the other Side of the Water has sent for our mutual Protection, such a Message I conceive will be of great Service.

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I have order'd three Forts in Halifax & one in Bedford to be built by the Militia, & garrison'd by them for some Time—Colo. Stewart of Augusta proposed, & sent the Sketch for fourteen Forts to be garrison'd by 700 Men, but I took no Notice of it, waiting for Capt. Hog's report of what he thinks may be necessary, & to be Manag'd with Frugality, for the People in Augusta appear to me so Selfish, that private. Views & Interest prevails with them without due Consideration of the Public Service, which makes me much on my guard with them.

I have sent up a new Como. of the Peace for Frederick County, & I have wrote Ld. Fairfax to apply to the Court to curtail the Tippling Houses, which is of great prejudice to our Men, & I hope this will have the desir'd effect; I doubt not You sent Yr. Drum about the Town forbidding to hurt Your Men, or entertaing. them at improper Hours, if guilty that You will take them into Custody, this may probably terrify them.

I doubt not You are strongly solicited for Men on every Alarm; Your own Prudence must direct You in sending Parties out; I am Weekly solicited from Augusta & the other frontier Counties to the So. ward, & I am oblig'd to write many Letters to the Comandg. Officers to assist the Frontier Settlements—I am convinc'd from the Number of Men You have it's difficult to give attention to all Complaints & Solicitations.

The Militia that Ld. Fairfax order'd to range about Conegacheg, may be continued as long as You may think them absolutely necessary—I think I have fully answer'd Your Letter & in what I may be deficient Your own Prudence must supply—War was proclaim'd here the 7th : & I order'd Mr. Walker to enclose You a Copy to be proclaimed at the head of Your Companies, & to be sent to Fort Cumbl'd & in case of miscarriage I send You a printed Copy—Pray God it may be attended with Success, in all our Operations at Home & abroad.

Have You order'd the Guns at Rock Creek to be brought to Winchester?

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Your Accounts I think have pass'd the Committee & I have given my Warrant for £5000—I wish You Health & Success in all Your Operations & I remain

Sir Your humble Servant ROBT. DINWIDDIE P. S. When the Draughts are discharg'd in Decr. Yr. number of private Men will be very few, in course there must be a reduction of Officers, as each Company should not be less than fifty, but I shall speak to You on this head when You come here.

Lieut. Ensa. Fleming with Ct Hog has wrote me for Leave to come here to settle some private Affairs; if You think proper to indulge him I shall approve of it.

1 Washington had written to Dinwiddie, August 4, as follows: "There is an act of Parliament to allow all servants to enlist, and the owners to be paid a reasonable allowance for them. If we had this privilege, we could soon complete the regiment." The servants mentioned in this paragraph were emigrants from Europe, or persons imported, whose services were purchased for a term of years, either from the masters of vessels, who brought them over, or from the individuals themselves. By a law of Virginia, all servants, except convicts, imported without indenture, if they were Christians or of Christian parentage, and above nineteen years of age, could be required to serve only five years; if under nineteen, their term of service was limited to the age of twenty-four. No such person could ever be sold as a slave.—HENING. These servants were exempt from military duty.—SPARKS. When Lord Loudoun succeeded Governor Shirley, as commander of the forces in America, he was empowered to raise a regiment consisting of four battalions, to be commanded by officers bearing the King's commission, and called the Royal American Regiment. He was authorized, also, to enlist servants of the above description, paying to their masters a proper compensation for the time they had yet to serve.—BROCK.

2 Joseph Waddell, in the Virginia Historical Magazine for April, 1895, states that there is a family tradition among the descendants of Captain Smith, then in charge of Vass's Fort, Augusta County, that in 1756 the place was attacked by a large body of French and Indians. After a sharp resistance the garrison yielded on a promise of being permitted to retire, but when they emerged, the enemy, enraged at the small number that had held them at bay, fell upon them, killing some and capturing others. Captain Smith and his son Joseph were made prisoners, and his son John was killed. There is to be found in Henning an Act of Assembly providing for the pay of Captain Smith during his two years' captivity.